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CORRESPONDENCE

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\*Efficacy of Anti-Depressants & Dawn’s editorial

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EFFICACY OF ANTI-DEPRESSANTS & DAWN’S EDITORIAL

Dear Editor,

This letter is in reference with the recent ‘provoca- tive’ editorial in Dawn on March 2, 20081, quoting a research by Kirsch et al2, with an added commen- tary, stating, “Once hooked on antidepressants, patients canturn suicidal if they try to wean themselves off the drug”.

Kirsch et al research, questioning efficacy of anti depressants in moderate depression, has been a hot topic in scientific circle over last three months.

The generalizability of this research is question- able for number of scientific reasons the details of which can not be discussed here due to limited space3. The authors statement by saying that anti depressants are ineffective seems quite absolute and against the scien- tific traditions.

It may not be applicable to our settings. For ex- ample the presentation and objective measurement of depression severity in Pakistan could be different from the west, due to its distinct culture norms and social mores.

The interpretation of this research seems biased. Number of studies have findings which are not in agree- ment with this review. For example, a study using Food and Drug Administration (FDA) data, Erick Turner and Robert Rosenthal concluded that individual antidepres- sant is better than placebo4.

Publishing, such misinterpreted information on the pretext of being mirror of public opinion is very unfortu- nate. This could increase the suffering of depressed

patients, making them further non compliant which is already a staggering problem.

Editorials like these can only add to the miscon- ceptions already prevalent in the public, as antidepres- sants are wrongly perceived as ineffective and addic- tive.

Media is capable of distorting public opinion and has been found to be overwhelmingly negative toward Psychiatry5. It is essential that the psychiatrists and psy- chologists should establish a liaison with media to ward off such unfortunate and some times biased publica- tions. Unfortunately, highly influential mental health pro- fessionals in Pakistan have not been able to exert the influence on print and electronic media for proper edu- cation of the masses.

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